

"I won't rest until we've brought this situation under control and to a positive conclusion," Farr said. "Consumers need to feel confident that the product they purchase is of high quality and without taint. Our growers need to grow, packers need to pack, shippers need to ship and the process needs to be verifiably safe."

Last night Farr sent a letter to California State Senator Dean Florez protesting Florez's promise to introduce legislation in the state legislature banning the use of recycled water for irrigation purposes. Farr took exception to Florez's plan saying it was premature to suggest any such legislation "before we know more about the actual causes of this and other E.coli outbreaks." Farr also noted that several studies over the years have shown the use of recycled water on crops to be safe.

The text of the letter to Florez is below.

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September 21, 2006
The Honorable Dean Florez
State Capitol, Room 5061
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Florez:

I am writing to respectfully ask that you not advance legislation in the California State Senate to ban the use of recycled water for fruit and vegetable crop production. I know that you share my deep concern for the suffering that the recent outbreak of E. coli has caused, both to those taken ill and to California's produce farmers. However, your proposal would do nothing to advance the cause of food safety. Indeed, its only effect would be to rob California of a viable and environmentally friendly water supply option. That doesn't strike me as a good deal.

As you may know, Monterey County has successfully operated a recycled water production and supply system since 1998. The system delivers 13,000 acre feet per year to over 12,000 acres of row crop land in the Castroville area of coastal Monterey County. It is a critical part of the Central Coast region's efforts to turn back salt water intrusion and absolutely necessary to keeping those 12,000 acres in agriculture and the workers who farm that ground employed.

Studies on the safety of crops grown with recycled water started in the 1970s. Further studies followed in the 1980s and 1990s. All concluded that properly treated water posed no human health risks. An extensive 1998 study focused on the Monterey system itself, found no evidence of any E. coli in the system's water. I have enclosed a copy of this report for your review. Finally, the facts on the ground have backed up these studies; there has never been a contamination impact from any recycled agricultural or drinking water operation in California.

In short, banning the use of recycled water on crops before we know more about the actual causes of this and other E coli outbreaks will help solve the problem about as much as a ban on the agricultural use of Central Valley Project water, which helps to irrigate the San Juan, Hollister, and Santa Clara Valleys.

Sincerely,

/s/

Sam Farr

Member of Congress